

ABAG'S REGION-WIDE RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

Bay Area Disaster Planning Efforts

The Bay Area has been subject to a variety of significant disasters and incidents over the years, ranging from fires to earthquakes to flooding. Planning for major disasters and events is therefore a priority for many Bay Area jurisdictions and organizations, and there are already a wide array of studies, plans, procedures, and tools that have been developed focusing on disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation. These efforts address earthquakes as well as other natural and manmade threats and focus on both the whole region and individual jurisdictions. Tabletop exercises, functional exercises, and drills are routine events, as are cross-sector and multidisciplinary workshops on specific issues.

Focus on recovery planning has historically been limited, and Bay Area recovery plans and studies that have been developed tend to be locally- rather than regionally-focused. To adequately address regional objectives for recovery, we need to move beyond these planning efforts. A regional strategy is most effectively developed when it emerges from local priorities and recognition of the need for jurisdictional collaboration.

Resilience Initiative Goal

The goal of ABAG's Resilience Initiative is to develop a collaborative, sustainable process through which stakeholders in the Bay Area can progressively build resilience through collaborative planning for recovery. The Initiative seeks to identify sector-specific recovery issues that may require jurisdictional coordination and collaboration, understand the current capacity of the region to implement a coordinated recovery around these issues, identify actions needed to improve this capacity, and develop implementation strategies for these actions.

Disaster Resilience

Disaster recovery, as we have seen in past disasters, can span decades. But anticipating post-disaster issues and acting now to expedite and support post-disaster recovery is essential. Communities can work in concert with mitigation and disaster response initiatives to create a more sustainable and resilient region—one that can absorb and minimize the impact of disasters, quickly return people to work, reopen businesses, and restore essential services needed for economic functionality after the event, while adapting and growing in the face of change.

Building disaster resilience is an on-going, dynamic process where we seek to continually improve our capacity to respond and recover from natural disasters. We also recognize that disaster resilience is just one component of a resilient region, which also includes social, economic, environmental resilience; and that resilient regions are composed of resilient individuals, organizations, and communities. As well, longer-term environmental and climate change challenges are issues integral to this initiative and must be folded into the resilience dialogue and common adaptive strategies, and we must work with other regional agencies pursuing these challenges, such as the Joint Policy Committee.

A Coordinated Regional Disaster Recovery is Imperative

To facilitate an effective and coordinated regional recovery from disasters, regional governance is needed to facilitate local governments coming together in collaboration with key actors, such as businesses, local governments, community leaders, major institutions, and infrastructure agencies to determine roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structures.

While governance structures are well-established for disaster response, regional governance for recovery is needed for large-scale disasters because:

- A united, coordinated vision for regional recovery will instill confidence in residents, businesses and the larger global community that the Bay Area will recover;
- Damage to regional infrastructure systems will require coordinated decision-making about restoration and reconstruction;
- Many cities will simultaneously face similar decisions about rebuilding housing, restoring business and financing restoration; crafting consistent, effective practices and leveraging mutual resources could facilitate a more uniform recovery across the region; and,
- A coordinated regional recovery will further existing goals for a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous region.

This initiative aligns very closely with FEMA's *National Disaster Recovery Framework* and the National Academies of Engineering study *Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative*. Further alignment with local and regional climate change action plans is essential. The presenting impacts of natural disasters are often the short-term expressions of rapidly changing climate conditions--sea-level rise and other changing environmental circumstances are the evolving, longer-term outcomes.

Initiative Schedule and Outcomes

Resilience Initiative has convened workshops to examine the current capacity and needs for facilitating an effective recovery of major regional systems including housing, businesses, infrastructure, and essential goods and services (including supply chains and delivery systems).

The ABAG Fall General Assembly will be held on Thursday, October 18 in San Francisco. ABAG delegates will focus on coordinated region-wide strategies for long-term recovery and identify ways to increase shared understanding, opportunities for coordination, and tools for communication before disruptive events to improve post-disaster recovery processes.

Along with the General Assembly findings, a series of papers will be prepared from the initiative's workshop discussions that review Bay Area's regional recovery capacity, including:

- A gap analysis white paper which will highlight gaps and needs in our current framework of roles, responsibilities, and decision making structures for a coordinated regional recovery.
- An action plan stemming from the white paper prioritizing actions that can be taken by the region and local governments to improve our regional recovery capacity.
- Issue papers identifying recovery topics on housing and business, infrastructure, and goods and services.